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SUBJECT: Paraguay Media Analysis

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Paraguay is characterized by a free and vibrant media environment with independent newspapers, TV and radio stations. While radio and TV penetration is close to 100%, Internet diffusion is fairly low at about 8%, with Google, Orkut and YouTube being the most popular sites. Text messaging and Twitter are increasingly popular due to wide distribution of cell phones (96%). In a July 2009 survey by the Open Source Center, those responding indicated the media most recently used were ?????? TV 94%, radio 81%, newspapers 32%, and internet 20%. Media frequently criticized the government and freely discussed opposition viewpoints without censorship. However, many media outlets reflect personal, business or political interests, and ethical and professional standards are often low. In general, reporting is sketchy, fact checking optional, and the line between reporting and editorializing is often blurred. Paradoxically, the media is still one of the most trusted institutions in Paraguay. END SUMMARY.

THE LAW

¶2. (U) The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views with few legal restrictions. Many of the leading media moguls own media conglomerates which include print, TV, and radio outlets, real estate, supermarkets, fast food chains, and import/export businesses. Many of the important media outlets also have obvious political biases.

¶3. (SBU) The government recently started an education TV channel, owns a public radio station, and pays for publicity. Unregistered, unlicensed radio stations are the norm, often owned by politicians, especially in the rural countryside. Communications Minister Augusto Dos Santos told PAO that he was interested in ??????legalizing?????? these community radio stations. He estimated that of the roughly 1,000 community radio stations, only 200 were licensed to broadcast. In November 2009, however, Dos Santos was criticized when it was revealed that the GOP paid for publicity on 51 community radio stations (of which only 3 had licenses).

POOR QUALITY OF REPORTING

¶4. (SBU) The quality of reporting is poor in Paraguay and ethical and professional standards are often low. In general, reporting is sketchy, fact checking optional, and the line between reporting and editorializing is often blurred. Many media outlets reflect

personal, business, or political interests. For example, both ABC Color and La Nacion mirror the conservative political views of the papers' owners (see below). Both have taken a hard-line against President Lugo and coverage of him and his government is extremely negative in these publications. Paradoxically, the media is still one of the most trusted institutions in Paraguay.

PRINT

15. (U) Paraguay has three main daily newspapers: ABC Color, Ultima Hora and La Nacion. ABC Color is center-right in orientation and the leading paper in circulation (40,000) and influence. Ultima Hora is center-left oriented and is second in circulation (22,000-25,000). Finally, La Nacion has a conservative business orientation and is third in circulation (8,000-10,000). These circulation numbers are a bit misleading because newspapers are frequently passed around and leading stories are discussed on TV and radio.

16. (U) Popular (Grupo Multimedia) and Cronica (Grupo La Nacion) are the two main tabloid-type dailies, with solid circulation amongst middle-low income readers. In fact, Popular, read mainly by less-educated urban Paraguayans, has a circulation (45,000) comparable to ABC Color. There are also regional newspapers like

Vanguardia and TN Press in Ciudad Del Este.

17. (SBU) ABC Color, the leading daily, was founded by Aldo Zuccolillo-Moscarda in 1967. Zuccolillo (which means steel in Spanish) at 79 is still going strong and very much involved in daily operations. Zuccolillo also owns a department store chain, a construction company, a finance company, and has extensive real estate holdings. Zuccolillo strongly dislikes Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and although he supported President Lugo in the 2008 elections, has since taken a strong anti-Lugo line. He has told us that he fears Lugo is a Chavez-Marxist who wants to shut down independent media. ABC is also highly critical of the long-ruling Colorado Party, defeated in the 2008 presidential elections after 61 years in power. Zuccolillo's political line is clearly reflected in both reporting and editorials. (NOTE: In December 2009, a group of supposed leftists started a public relations campaign against ABC Color entitled ABC Lies involving posters, flyers, and internet sites. ABC Color is a powerful media conglomerate and it is doubtful that Zuccolillo, who survived some tough times when his paper was shut down during Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship in the 1980s, is too worried. END NOTE).

18. (SBU) Ultima Hora, founded in 1973, has a center-left, social justice editorial line. Today Ultima Hora is owned by business and media tycoon Antonio Juan Vierci Mendoza. Vierci was born in 1945 and studied Accounting and Business Administration at the Catholic University of Asuncion. Vierci, more of an entrepreneur than a journalist, has extensive business holdings which include supermarkets, the Paraguayan Burger King franchise, import/export businesses, and several fashion and gossip magazines. Vierci is also the owner of CIM, Centro Informativo Multimedios, a media group which includes two television channels (Telefuturo and La Tele) and two FM radio stations (Radio La Estacion FM 91.1 and Radio Urbana FM 106.0). Vierci is a conservative business man and has told us that he is pro-U.S. and believes the world needs a strong and vibrant USA.

¶9. (SBU) La Nacion has a conservative and business oriented editorial line and is owned by businessman and well-known Colorado Party activist Osvaldo Dominguez-Dibb. Dominguez-Dibb also owns a cigarette manufacturer (Tabacalera Boquern) and has extensive real estate holdings. His son, Alejandro Dominguez Wilson-Smith, who studied in the US, is the Director of Grupo La Nacion, which includes two dailies: La Nacion and Cronica, radio 970 AM and various FM stations. Both father and son have ties to the Stroessner family. It has been rumored (but not proven) that Dominguez-Dibb is involved in the production of fraudulent brand cigarettes. (NOTE: Paraguay is considered the number two producer worldwide of counterfeit brand cigarettes, after China. END NOTE).

TELEVISION

¶10. (U) Paraguay has four nationwide TV stations with a significant media presence: SNT (ch. 9), Telefuturo (ch. 4), El Trece (ch.13), and Red Guarani (ch. 2). Nearly every household in Paraguay has a television set. Other TV stations with a smaller presence are: Paravision (ch.5), La Tele (ch.11), Unicanal (cable ch.8), and recently inaugurated Arandu Rape (government-owned educational cable TV channel 4).

¶11. (SBU) Sistema Nacional de Television (SNT - Channel 9) reaches the widest audience in the country (76%). SNT is a commercial TV station with a centrist line. The leading journalists are: Yolanda Park (former IV), Mario Ferreiro, Carlos Troche and Manuel Cuenca. SNT began operating in 1965, and is owned by the Albavision Group belonging to Mexican businessman Angel Gonzalez. Gonzalez also owns other TV and radio stations in Mexico and Central America. The Director of SNT since 1999 has been Ismael Hadid Florentin. Hadid, 48 years old, is Paraguayan of Middle Eastern descent. In addition to Channel 9 and its nine repeaters, Hadid also manages Channel 7 Itap???a, Channel 8 Ciudad del Este and Channel 5 Paravision. Hadid has told us he believes in the US, is amazed at how we keep reinventing ourselves (in reference to the election of Barack Obama), and is proud that his son graduated from Georgetown University and speaks English.

¶12. (U) Telefuturo Channel 4, owned by businessman Antonio J. Vierci, is part of the Centro Informativo Multimedios Group (CIM) which includes popular FM radio Estacion 40. Telefuturo is a commercial station with a center-social justice line. Telefuturo started broadcasting in 1997. Some of its leading journalists are Oscar Acosta, Sanie L???pez-Garelli, Carlos Baez, Luis Bareiro and Ana Rivas. Telefuturo covers 75% of the country and has a 36% market share of primetime news.

¶13. (U) El Trece or Red Privada de Comunicaci???n Channel 13 is a commercial television station, with a centrist line. El Trece was founded in 1981 by Nicolas Bo Parodi but was bought in 2007 by Christian Alfredo Chena of the Teledifusora Paraguaya group. Chena is a young entrepreneur and e-commerce pioneer who controls 80% of total shares. Teledifusora Paraguaya includes Channel 13 and Radio Cardinal AM and FM. Some of the leading journalists are Guillermo Domanizky, Carlos Martini, Diego Marini and Natalia Cabarcos.

¶14. (U) Red Guarani Channel 2 is part of the Red de Comunicaci???n Integral/Radio Obedira group. Red Guarani is a commercial TV station with centrist family oriented programming. The director of Red Guarani is Arnoldo Wiens, host of a popular evening issue-oriented talk show. The leading journalists are Roberto Coronel, Oscar Escobar, Mariana Pineda and Jazmin Garcia.

RADIO

¶15. (U) Radio in many ways is the most important communication medium in Paraguay with the largest audience share and largest reach in rural areas. Several stations have national coverage; the most important AM ones are ANDUTI 1020, Primero de Marzo 780, Cardinal 730, Radio Caritas 680 and Radio Uno 650.

¶16. (U) Top-rated RADIO ANDUTI - 1020 AM and 107.1 FM is a commercial station with a centrist line founded in 1962. It is part of the Holding de Radio group, owned by Humberto Rubin and his family. The Holding de Radio group includes Radio ANDUTI, Radio Mburucuy in Pedro Juan Caballero and Radio FM Concert.

¶17. (U) Humberto Rubin, age 75, is a journalist with a long career in radio and television. Rubin faced incarceration because of his defense of democracy during Stroessner's dictatorship and his radio station was closed down. Rubin is married to present Minister of Women Gloria Rubin and has several children and grandchildren who also work in media. Rubin has two daily programs on Radio ANDUTI, a top-rated morning show and an evening newscast program. He also has a live TV program on La Tele Channel 11 which airs twice a week. Radio ANDUTI's leading journalists besides Rubin are Hugo Rubin, Leo Rubin, Divina Mendoza, and Osmar Apuril.

¶18. (U) RADIO PRIMERO DE MARZO 780 AM is part of the Megacadena de Comunicacion group, whose director is Estela Riveros. Radio Primero de Marzo has one of the largest countrywide audience shares in Paraguay. Radio Primero de Marzo can be heard in Argentine and Brazilian border towns. Some of its leading journalists are: Carlos Peralta, Mabel Rehnfeldt, Yolanda Park, Alfonso Leon, and Vladimir Jara. Carlos Peralta is one of Paraguay's most influential broadcast journalists. Peralta hosts the second-ranked radio morning show.

¶19. (U) RADIO CARDINAL and 92.30 FM is a commercial station with a centrist line. The director is Alfredo Chena from the Chena Group. Some of the leading journalists are: Diego Marini, Roberto Sosa, and Guillermo Domanisky y Santiago Gonzalez.

¶20. (U) RADIO 970 AM is part of Grupo La Nacion, whose Director is Alejandro Dominguez Wilson-Smith. Some of its leading journalists are: Clari Arias (FM radio) and Enrique Vargas Pea, also a columnist/editorialist with La Nacion.

¶21. (U) RADIO CARITAS 680 AM is a commercial station owned by Catholic University. It is one of the few radio stations which reject tobacco and alcohol advertising. Radio Caritas, founded by the Franciscan Order, was one of the few independent outlets that survived the restrictions/closures of the Stroessner era. Caritas is where many now famous media personalities and journalists such as Humberto Rubin started their careers. Some of the leading journalists are: Carlos Martini, Jose Maria Costa, Ramon Casco, and Susana Oviedo.

¶22. (U) Radio Estacion 40 (FM 91.1) is a popular FM station with younger listeners which belongs to the A.J. Vierci Group.

¶23. (U) Radio Nacional del Paraguay 920AM/95.1 FM is a bare-bones government-owned radio station with a modest listenership, although it is available nationwide and reaches deep into the countryside. During the Stroessner years Radio Nacional was an important propaganda tool. When Stroessner was deposed in 1989, Radio Nacional ceased to be an official government-owned station but survived as the official propaganda organ of the Colorado party. Since 2008, with the defeat of the Colorados, a process of restructuring and refunding has been undertaken by the GOP. Now the focus of the radio station is cultural programming, music, and promotion of government social and health initiatives, with some programming in the local indigenous language Guaraní. The current director of Radio Nacional is Judith Vera. Vera, in her 50s, is an independent, professional, radio journalist. She has told us she sees U.S National Public Radio as a good model for Radio Nacional.

HOLLOWAY